

Seattle City Council

Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting

2 p.m. Wednesday, February 24th 2010

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Priya Keefe**

Today's poet is **Yvonne Croteau**

Yvonne Croteau has been a member of the North Seattle Poetry Workshop since 1997, has newly joined the Red Pen writer's group and has been published in *Spindrift*. She is a native of Eastern Washington and a graduate of the English Literature department of the University of Washington. Over the last fifteen years she has performed in many local venues as a ballet dancer, and for eight years has worked as a yoga instructor in local studios. She lives on Capitol Hill with her great love, Dj Alton, and their two psycho-sweet kitties.

Three Forks

by Yvonne Croteau

Come every May, the interlopers left us for three months
quaking in the dust, and your bachelor buttons brought their heads up
on the hills where horses whinnied.

It's then that I could hear the sound of your first name, the name that
trickled down your streams in summer where
chestnut blue-green swallows flew, the name that
tinkled like a bell in farmers' ears beyond the roaring
fans at football games, the announcers, the anthems,
the lonely calls home.

The story goes, the native people wouldn't stay.

They came here to invert, light fires, dance and sing,
and leave you again.

For seven hills and three rivers split you open, and your
flooding lowland prairies crammed with big basalt
made you hard to love.

But new arrivals brought their brutal tools, laid
tracks, built bridges, leveled hills,
opened a lottery to brand you new, and let a railroad man
named Pullman who wouldn't love you

change your name.

They blasted rock and dug you up, and found you held
wild streams down in your clay, artesian wells,
waters that we'd taint and pump to towers on the hills.
You were shunted from farmers' willing hands to
papers bargained for and state and federal signed.
You were born again a land grant school, ceded with
raping myths of endless sowing and draining soil and
a truth of air like dust and ponds of run-off.
They burned enough wheat up to waste, to store in elevators and
sell, by not selling, to the government.

And those who love you
walk the tracks behind the streets where
willows watch your changing flow and waters
run through rushes rasping out your name, the name that moves on
herons' backs, through empty silos echoing with memories of older grains.
It bangs against the sides of vacant railroad cars, floods and
gushes like a ghost, wet, womanly.
We sing your old name back to you, and wild
winds whip through random prairies, coyotes call, and underground
your water rests.

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